

3.

In responding to this rejection, the Applicant has amended independent claim 16 to specify, in the preamble thereof, that the stationary tubular jacket bears the steering column for rotation within that tubular jacket. Moreover, the end of the claim has been augmented to recite that the code disc is disposed proximate to the bearing of the steering column in the tubular jacket in order to improve an accuracy in the steering angle measurement. Disclosure for this added language is found in the specification page 10, last paragraph, and page 11, last full paragraph, in particular the last two sentences thereof.

Claim 16 as amended is clearly distinguished from the prior art of record. In particular, the Johnson reference does not disclose a tubular shell having a bearing function and, in fact, bearing the steering column therein for rotation. On the contrary, the tubular enclosure of Johnson (reference symbols 18 and 20) is referred to in the description as a shroud as can be clearly seen in figure 5. Therefore, the tubular casing of the Johnson reference is simply a cover and does not provide any kind of bearing function for the steering column. Moreover, Johnson is completely silent on the manner in which his steering column is actually borne.

Claim 16 as amended has the advantages clearly recited in the previous Office Action to which the Examiner is hereby referred and is therefore sufficiently distinguished from the prior art of record to satisfy the requirements of 35 USC 103, in particular, since the key bearing feature of the tubular enclosure in cooperation with the code disc is completely missing from prior art. The remaining claims of record inherit the limitations of the base claim and are therefore similarly distinguished from the prior art and thereby also satisfy conditions for patenting. The

4

Examiner is therefore respectfully requested to enter this amendment and to pass this case on to issuance.

No new matter has been added in this amendment.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Paul Vincent

Registration number 37,461

Dreiss, Fuhlendorf, Steimle & Becker

Postfach 10 37 62

D-70032 Stuttgart

Federal Republic of Germany

Telephone: ++49/711-24 89 38-0

Fax: ++49/711-24 89 38-99

Enclosures: Amended claim 16 in square-bracketed and underlined form

FAX RECEIVED

MAY 08 2003

TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2800

5

16. (amended) A steering column module for vehicles having a steering wheel cooperating with a steering column, [the steering column borne for rotation within a stationary tubular jacket] wherein a stationary tubular jacket bears the steering column for rotation within that tubular jacket, the steering column module comprising:

a first switch member mounted to the tubular jacket;
a rotatable signal case component cooperating with the steering column for secure mutual rotation therewith;
a code disc cooperating with said rotatable signal case component for secure mutual rotation therewith;
a stationary steering angle module mounted to said first switch member; and
a steering angle sensor cooperating with said steering angle module and communicating with said code disc to measure a steering angle of the steering column, wherein said code disc is disposed proximate to a bearing of the steering column in the tubular jacket to improve an accuracy in said steering angle measurement.